

Barbara Boxer

1940–



Image courtesy of the Member

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, 1983–1993

UNITED STATES SENATOR, 1993–

DEMOCRAT FROM CALIFORNIA

A FORCEFUL ADVOCATE FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN, consumers, the environment, and her state of California, Barbara Boxer became a United States Senator in January 1993 after 10 years of service in the House of Representatives. In 2004, she received more than 6.9 million votes, the highest total for any Senate candidate ever.

Barbara Levy was born in Brooklyn, New York, on November 11, 1940, to Ira Levy and Sophie Silvershein Levy. She graduated with a B.A. from Brooklyn College in 1962 and married Stewart Boxer. The family relocated to northern California in 1965, where the Boxers raised two children: Doug and Nicole. From 1974 to 1976 Boxer worked for Congressman John Burton, who represented the California district encompassing Marin County. In 1976, she won election to the Marin County board of supervisors, serving as its first chairwoman.¹

In 1982, John Burton decided to retire from the U.S. House and endorsed his protégée, Boxer. In the general election she defeated Republican Dennis McQuaid with 52 percent of the vote. Subsequent re-election campaigns provided no serious challenger, and Boxer remained in the House for four more terms. While serving in the House, Boxer was a member of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, the Budget Committee, the Armed Services Committee, the Committee on Government Operations, and the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families.²

In 1992 Representative Boxer declared her candidacy for the U.S. Senate. She defeated Bruce Herschensohn, a conservative Los Angeles media commentator, by a margin of 48 to 43 percent. Her two subsequent re-elections to the Senate have seen her through with much more comfortable margins.³

As a U.S. Senator, Boxer is a strong proponent of medical research to find cures for diseases. Among the first in Congress to recognize health maintenance organization (HMO) abuses, she authored a Patients' Bill of Rights in 1997 and continues to fight for these protections and for affordable health care.

The Senate's leading defender of a woman's right to choose, Senator Boxer authored the Freedom of Choice Act of 2004 and helped lead the floor fight for passage of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act. She also continues to take a prominent role in the efforts to prevent congressional opponents of abortion from weakening a woman's constitutional right to choose.

Senator Boxer has been recognized for her efforts to create a cleaner, healthier environment. She authored the amendment to the Safe Drinking Water Act to ensure that drinking water standards are set to protect children and other vulnerable populations. She has been a leader in the fight to remove arsenic from drinking water, to block oil drilling in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge and along California's coast, and to revitalize the Superfund by making polluters pay to clean up the toxic waste they leave behind.

Senator Boxer has fought for policies that help women succeed at home and at work, from equal pay to family and medical leave. A leader in expanding quality after-school options for families, Boxer authored landmark legislation providing federal support for programs to increase student performance while decreasing juvenile delinquency and crime. Today, federal funding for after-school programs has risen dramatically from \$750,000 in 1995 to almost \$1 billion per year, covering about 1 million children each year. She is now pushing to reach 2.5 million children by 2007.

Senator Boxer joined colleagues to pass the 1994 Crime Bill, which banned assault weapons and established the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, helping local law enforcement reduce crime to its lowest rate in 25 years. Her bill to prevent the criminal use of personal information obtained through motor vehicle records was signed into law and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. She also authored the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) while serving in the House and helped steer it through the Senate; it, too, is now law. She has authored the Violence Against Children Act, based on the successful VAWA.

In response to the September 11th attacks, Senator Boxer authored a bill to protect commercial airliners against attacks by shoulder-fired missiles, and she wrote the law allowing airline pilots with special training to carry guns in the cockpit. She wrote the law to ensure that air marshals would be on board high-risk flights, and she continues to press for implementation of this measure to make the skies as secure as they can be. She has also authored legislation on port security, rail security, and providing assistance to first responders.

Senator Boxer serves on the Senate Committees on Commerce, Foreign Relations, and Environment and Public Works, and is also the Democratic Chief Deputy Whip.

FOR FURTHER READING

Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, "Barbara Boxer," <http://bioguide.congress.gov>

Boxer, Barbara. *Strangers in the Senate: Politics and the New Revolution of Women in America* (New York, 1993).

Mikulski, Barbara, et al. *Nine and Counting: The Women of the Senate* (New York: William Morrow, 2000).

NOTES

- 1 *Politics in America*, 2002 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2001): 65–66; "Official Biography of Barbara Boxer," <http://boxer.senate.gov/about/index.cfm> (accessed 16 December 2004).
- 2 *Current Biography*, 1994 (New York: H.W. Wilson and Company, 1994): 63–66.
- 3 "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present," <http://clerk.house.gov/members/electionInfo/elections.html>.